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DOCTOR APHRA

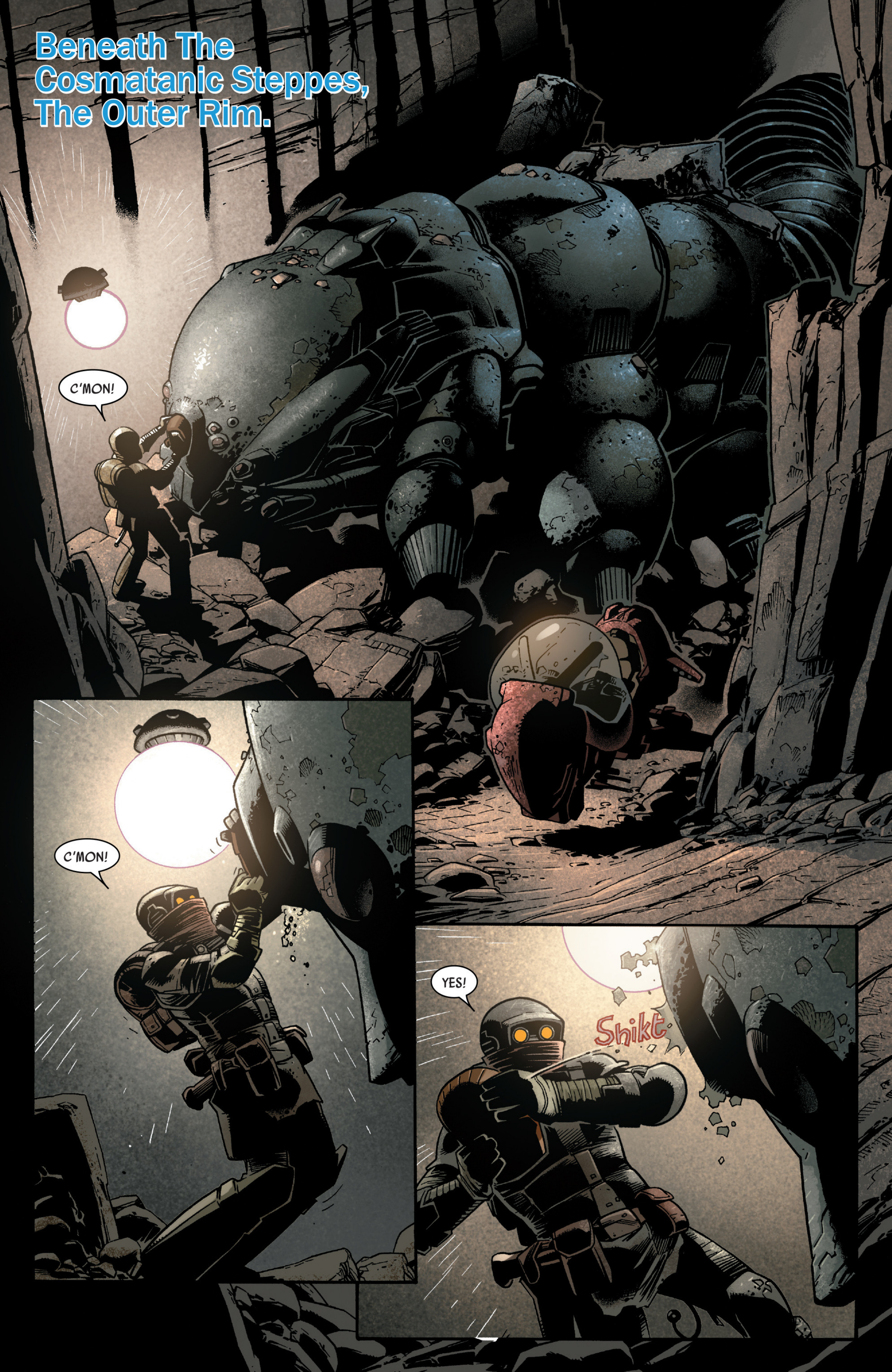
APHRA

Book I, Part I

It is a period of opportunity. In a galaxy oppressed by the cruelty of Imperial forces, there is little hope for the future. But for those used to operating on the fringes, there is much potential for profit.

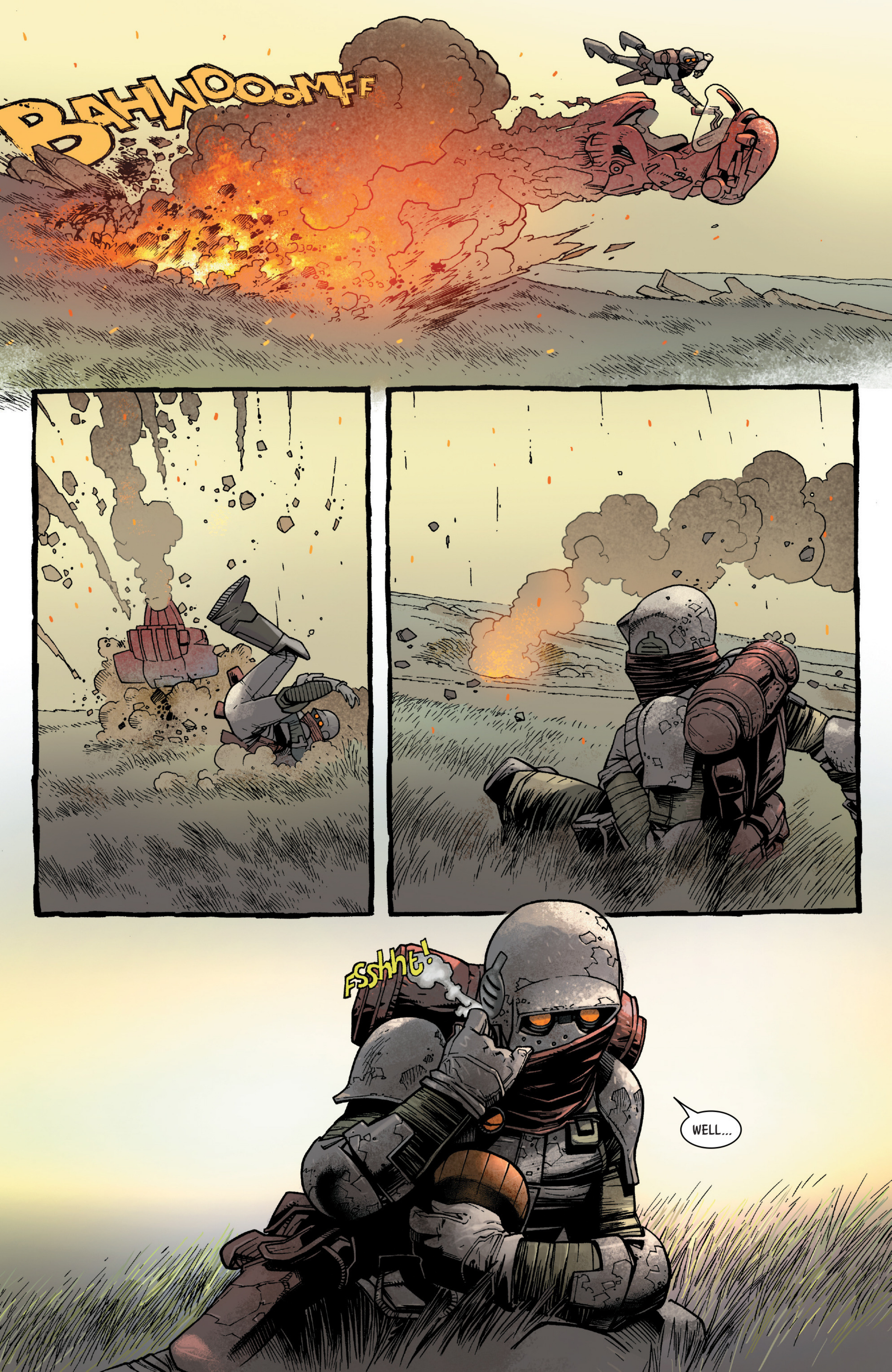
Rogue archaeologist Doctor Aphra is no stranger to risk in the pursuit of both credits and thrills; from her recent acquisition of a pair of homicidal droids, to her ever-increasing debt to Wookiee warrior Black Krrsantan, and most of all, her secret work for Darth Vader, Imperial enforcer and Dark Lord of the Sith.

Now, having successfully faked her own death at Vader's hands, Aphra is back to doing what she does best: locating and liberating rare artifacts, droid and Wookiee companions by her side....


Beneath The Cosmatanic Steppes, The Outer Rim.
C'MON!
C'MON!
YES!
Shikt

YES!
HMMMMMMMMM
YE--
MMMMMMMM
NO!
RAAAOOOAAR
SCROOOAAHHH

GRRROOOAAAAAR
BiP
BiP
BiP
BiP
BiP
BiP


BAHWOOOMFF
FSSHHT!
WELL...

THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE.

SURE WAS.
APHRA?
WAIT, YOU--

FTOW

THANKS!

STAR WARS

DOCTOR APHRA

Fulan Ro,
The Cosmatanic
Steppes.
RAHNK!
OH, MY.
HELLO,
BEAUTIFUL.

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OH, EXCELLENT, MASTER. THAT IS A BEAUTIFUL PIECE...
IT FEELS STRANGE TO ACTUALLY BE DEALING IN ARTIFACTS AGAIN. THIS IS AN OBJECT OF GENUINE CULTURAL IMPORTANCE.
STEALING-- I MEAN, RECOVERING-- SOMETHING THAT CAN'T BE USED TO KILL PEOPLE IS KINDA NOVEL.
BLEEP!
QUITE, BEETEE. WE HAVE TO DISAGREE, MASTER APHRA.
IT'D SUFFICE AS A FAIRLY STURDY BLUDGEON.
GUYS, KNOCK IT OFF.
WHERE'S KRRSANTAN?
ABOARD THE NEW ARK ANGEL, MASTER APHRA.
PERFORMING THE FINAL PREPARATION FOR OUR DEPARTURE.
GOOD. I WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFO--
OH.
HEY, APHRA...

...DON'T YOU OWE THE FINE ORGANIZATION I REPRESENT THE FIRST PAYMENT ON YOUR COLLECTION OF SECONDHAND BOLTS?
OH, GREAT. I'LL STALL.
GET KRRSANTAN OUT HERE.
HEY, SOO-TATH! YOU'RE LOOKING GOOD!
LOVE THE HAT. IS IT NEW?

YOU CAN'T CHARM YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS, APHRA.
I'M NOT TRYING TO GET OUT OF PAYING! YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I VALUE OUR WORKING RELATIONSHIP.
I OWE YOU-- IN A METAPHORICAL AS WELL AS THE VERY LITERAL SENSE THAT BRINGS YOU THREE LOVELY GENTLEMEN CALLING.
I'M OFF TO SELL THE ARTIFACT I'VE RECOVERED, AND WHEN I'M BACK, THE SYNDICATE WILL HAVE THEIR MONEY!
WELL, WHY NOT CUT OUT THE MIDDLEMAN AND JUST HAND THAT OVER?
NOT A GOOD IDEA. THIS ISN'T LIKE PAWNING STOLEN STARSHIP PARTS. IF YOU DON'T HAVE ARCHAEOLOGIST ACCREDITATION YOU'D GET 0.2% OF ITS VALUE, TOPS.
I CAN GET BACK WITHIN THE WEEK--HELL, IT COULD SELL INSTANTLY, AND I'LL BE BACK TOMORROW.
AND IF IT SELLS FOR AS MUCH AS I THINK IT WILL, WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT A PAYMENT...
...WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE WHOLE LOAN IN ONE GO!
HMM. THEN I THINK WE'LL TAKE IT AND FIND AN ARCHAEOLOGIST OF OUR OWN TO SELL IT.
HAND IT OVER.
I'M BEGINNING TO SUSPECT THAT YOU MAY NOT HOLD OUR WORKING RELATIONSHIP IN THE SAME HIGH ESTEEM AS I DO.
I AM HURT, SOO-TATH.

NO, YOU'RE NOT.
BUT SOON YOU WILL BE, MISS APHRA.
DOCTOR APHRA, BUT THAT'S A PRETTY GOOD THREATENING ONE-LINER.
I MEAN, THIS IS A REASON WHY I'VE ALWAYS LOVED WORKING WITH YOU GUYS. YOU'VE GOT STYLE AND CLASS AND...
OH NO, IT'S THE DEATH STAR!
SORRY, MY MISTAKE. TRICK OF THE LIGHT.
IT WAS THE MOO--
GGGGRRRRRHHHH!
SMAKK!

GGGGRRRKHHH!
ON THE OFF CHANCE YOU AREN'T FLUENT IN WOOKIEE, THAT'S A COLORFUL DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THIS BOWCASTER WILL DO TO YOU IF YOU DON'T REFRAIN FROM DISMEMBERING MASTER APHRA.
NOW, I ALSO OWE BLACK KRRSANTAN A LOT OF MONEY AND HE'S NOT GOING TO LET YOU ENDANGER HIS INVESTMENT.
YOU STILL NEED TO PAY US.
OKAY-- WANT TO WAGER ON THE PAYMENT?
MY BIG AND FURRY VERSUS YOURS. NO WEAPONS. DOUBLE OR QUITS.
HMM.
OKAY, WHY NOT--

BOTCH
RRR AAAAAAA AAAH!
KRUNCH
WHUMP
CRUMP
WHOK!!
ENOUGH, KRRSANTAN.

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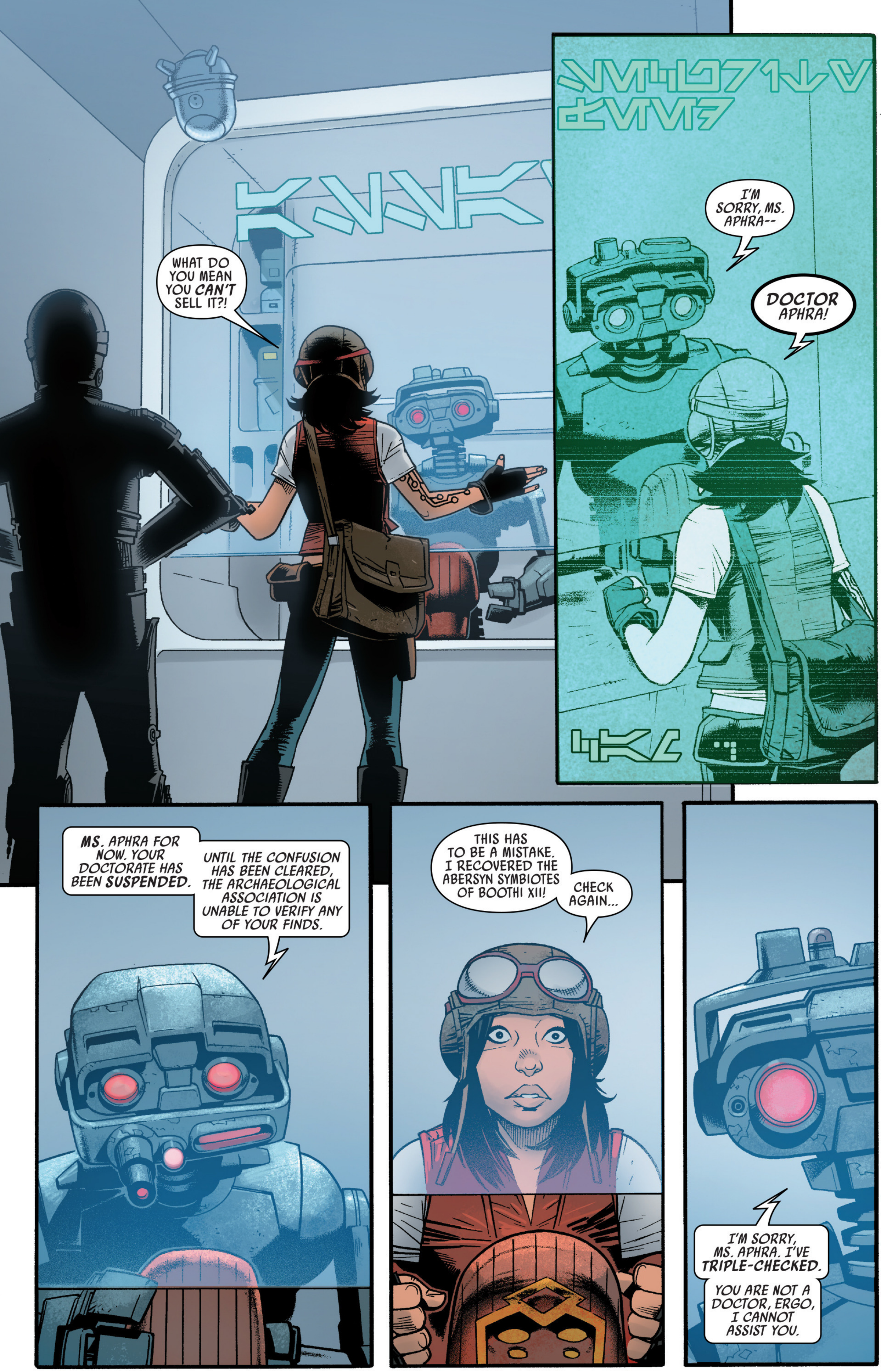
Later...
OH, THAT GOES RIGHT THROUGH ME.
BETTER GO AND FEED THE SARLACC...
AHEM.
MAY WE HAVE YOUR ATTENTION FOR A FEW MOMENTS, PLEASE?
WH-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? GOT AN OIL LEAK?
DROIDS AREN'T MEANT TO BE BACK HERE.
DROIDS AREN'T MEANT TO DO MANY THINGS, SIR.
I RARELY LET THAT STOP ME.
STAB

WH-WHAT? WH...
WHKKKKHHH.
NOTHING. JUST A NEUROTOXIN.
IT WILL BE MOSTLY PAINLESS AND QUICK, MORE'S THE PITY. IT'LL LOOK LIKE A HEART FAILURE.
I'M SURE THE POISON WOULD BE DISCOVERED ON A MORE DEVELOPED WORLD, BUT FRANKLY, HERE, LIFE IS CHEAP.
CERTAINLY FAR CHEAPER THAN THIS RATHER LUXURY-RANGE NEUROTOXIN.
YOU HAVE MADE A CRUCIAL, FATAL MISTAKE. I AM ENJOYING MY TIME IN THE COMPANY OF MASTER APHRA.
AND AS LONG AS THAT REMAINS TRUE, I DO NOT BELIEVE I'LL LET ANYTHING RISK INTERFERING WITH THAT.
LET'S HOPE THE GANGSTER RUFFIAN WHO REPLACES YOU IS MORE POLITE, HMM?
BLEEP!
NO, YOU CAN'T BURN THE BODY, BEETEE.
THAT MAY GIVE AWAY THAT HIS DEATH WASN'T ENTIRELY NATURAL.
BLEEP!
NO, SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION IS NOT A THING.

Archaeo-Prime,
The Cosmatanic Steppes.
DO YOU THINK YOU'LL GET A BUYER SWIFTLY, MASTER APHRA?
LET ME EXPLAIN THE COSMATANIC STEPPES. IT IS A LAYER OF MANTLE SUSPENDED ABOVE A GAS GIANT. IT'S BEEN A CENTER OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIGS AND SCAVENGING FOR THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS OF THE HISTORICAL ART RUSH.
THE KEY QUESTION? "WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT HERE?" AND MAYBE--JUST MAYBE--THE SECRET IS IN THE WONDERFUL LITTLE PIECE WE FOUND.
EVERY BIG PLAYER WILL BE LOOKING AT ANY VERIFIED ARTIFACT, LET ALONE SOMETHING AS GOOD AS THIS...
CHANCES ARE, BY THE END OF THE DAY, WE ARE GOING TO BE RICH.


WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU CAN'T SELL IT?!
I'M SORRY, MS. APHRA--
DOCTOR APHRA!
MS. APHRA FOR NOW. YOUR DOCTORATE HAS BEEN SUSPENDED.
UNTIL THE CONFUSION HAS BEEN CLEARED, THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION IS UNABLE TO VERIFY ANY OF YOUR FINDS.
THIS HAS TO BE A MISTAKE. I RECOVERED THE ABERSYN SYMBIOTES OF BOOTHI XII!
CHECK AGAIN...
I'M SORRY, MS. APHRA. I'VE TRIPLE-CHECKED.
YOU ARE NOT A DOCTOR, ERGO, I CANNOT ASSIST YOU.

NEXT!
THIS IS GOING TO GET NOTHING ON THE BLACK MARKET.
I...THIS IS TERRIBLE.
OH, MASTER. IT MUST BE TERRIBLE TO HAVE YOUR CREDENTIALS QUESTIONED.
THUNK THUNK
IT IS!
I MEAN, OBVIOUSLY I CHEATED.
BUT HOW DID THEY FIND OUT?
RRRRRRRRRR
WELL, YOUR QUESTIONABLE MORALITY WAS ALWAYS GOING TO CATCH UP WITH YOU EVENTUALLY, BELOVED...

...SO PERHAPS IT'S LUCKY THAT SOMEONE WHO LOVES YOU WAS THE PERSON WHO UNCOVERED YOUR ETHICAL LAPSE.
AND NOW WE CAN LOOK TO YOUR SPIRITUAL SALVATION...
DAD.
OH.
To be continued in DOCTOR APHRA #2...

Writer KIERON GILLEN
Artist KEV WALKER
Colorist ANTONIO FABELA
Letterer VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA
Cover Artist KAMOME SHIRAHAMA
Assistant Editor HEATHER ANTOS
Editor JORDAN D. WHITE
Executive Editor C.B. CEBULSKI
Editor In Chief AXEL ALONSO
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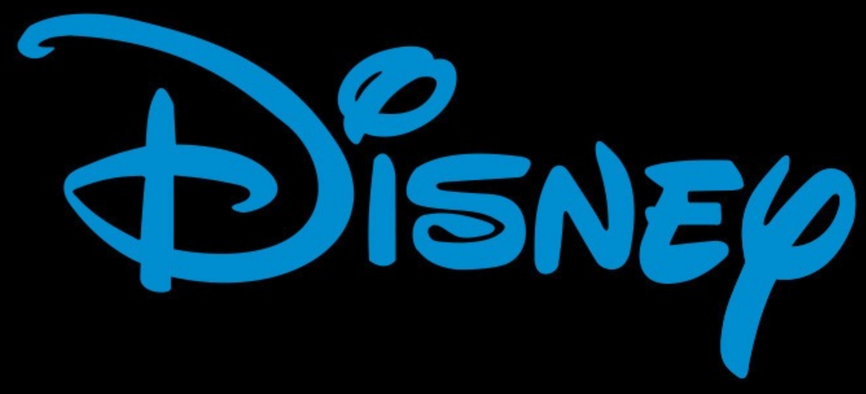

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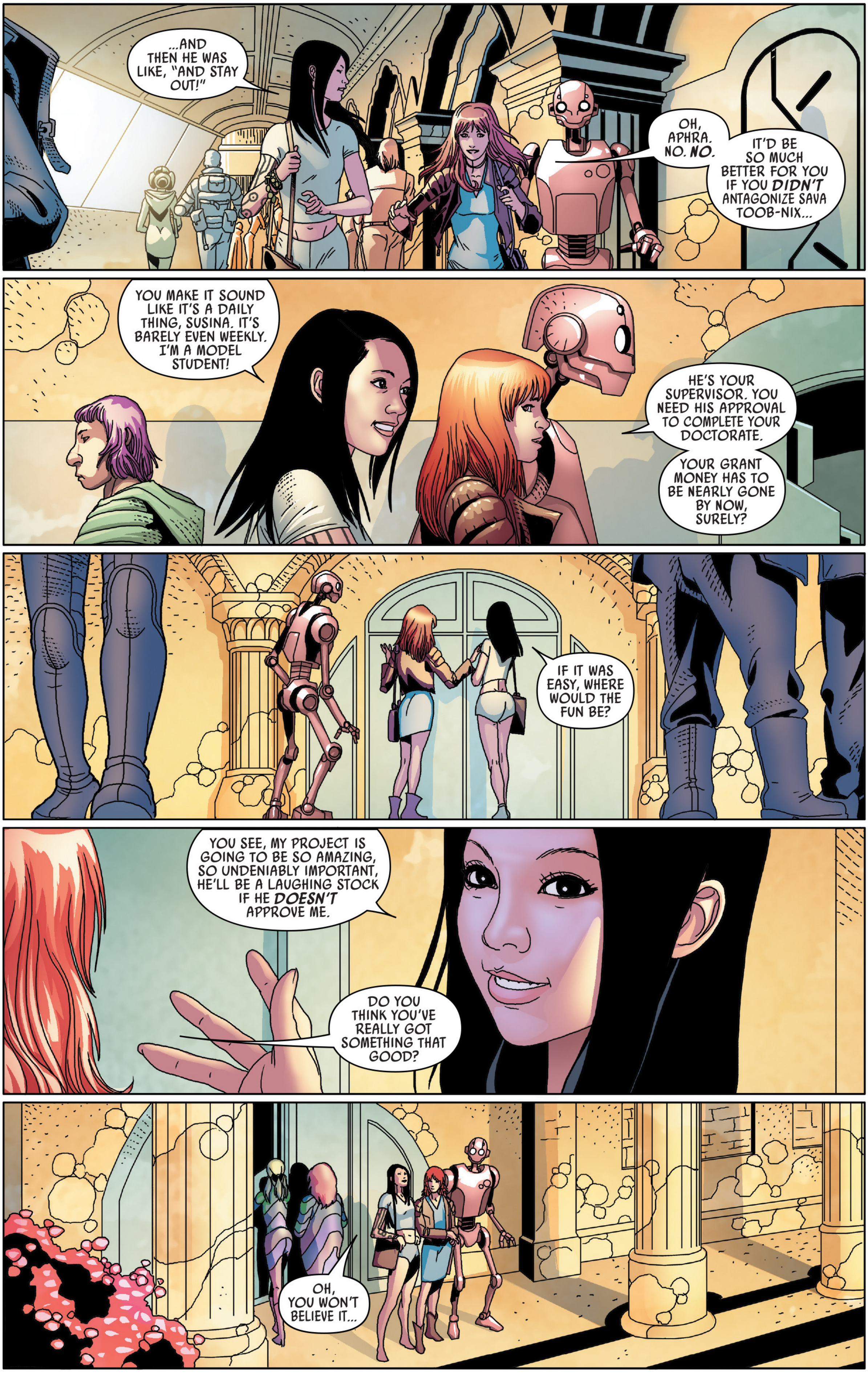
University Of Bar'leth. Years Ago...
APHRA!
YOU ARE A DOCTORAL CANDIDATE.
WHY ARE YOU SITTING IN WITH MY UNDERGRADS?
I'M A CONCERNED IMPERIAL CITIZEN, SIR.
I WAS WONDERING...
KLLK
...HOW IS THE SECURITY ON THE HOLO-PROJECTORS?


...AND THEN HE WAS LIKE, "AND STAY OUT!"
OH, APHRA. NO. NO.
IT'D BE SO MUCH BETTER FOR YOU IF YOU DIDN'T ANTAGONIZE SAVA TOOB-NIX...
YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE IT'S A DAILY THING, SUSINA. IT'S BARELY EVEN WEEKLY. I'M A MODEL STUDENT!
HE'S YOUR SUPERVISOR. YOU NEED HIS APPROVAL TO COMPLETE YOUR DOCTORATE.
YOUR GRANT MONEY HAS TO BE NEARLY GONE BY NOW, SURELY?
IF IT WAS EASY, WHERE WOULD THE FUN BE?
YOU SEE, MY PROJECT IS GOING TO BE SO AMAZING, SO UNDENIABLY IMPORTANT, HE'LL BE A LAUGHING STOCK IF HE DOESN'T APPROVE ME.
DO YOU THINK YOU'VE REALLY GOT SOMETHING THAT GOOD?
OH, YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT...

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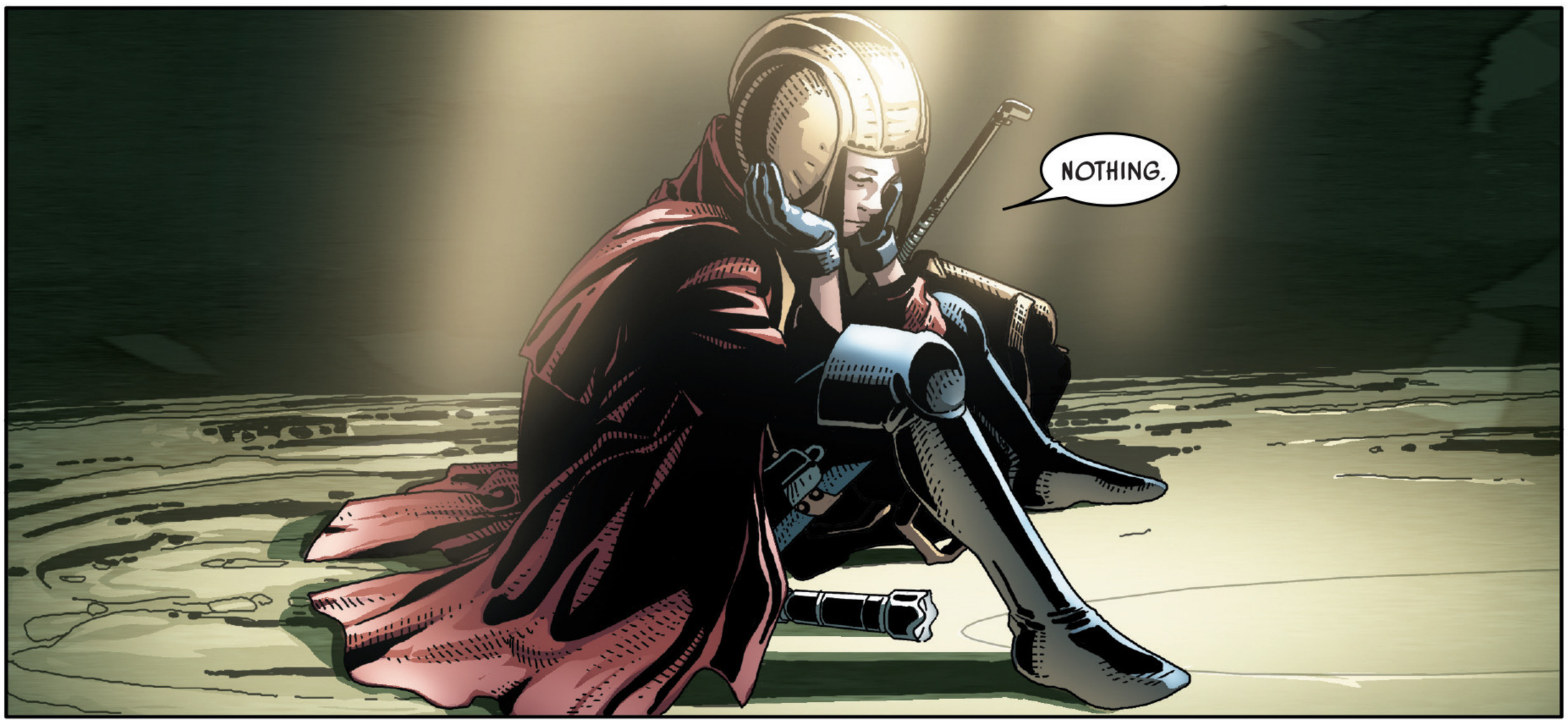
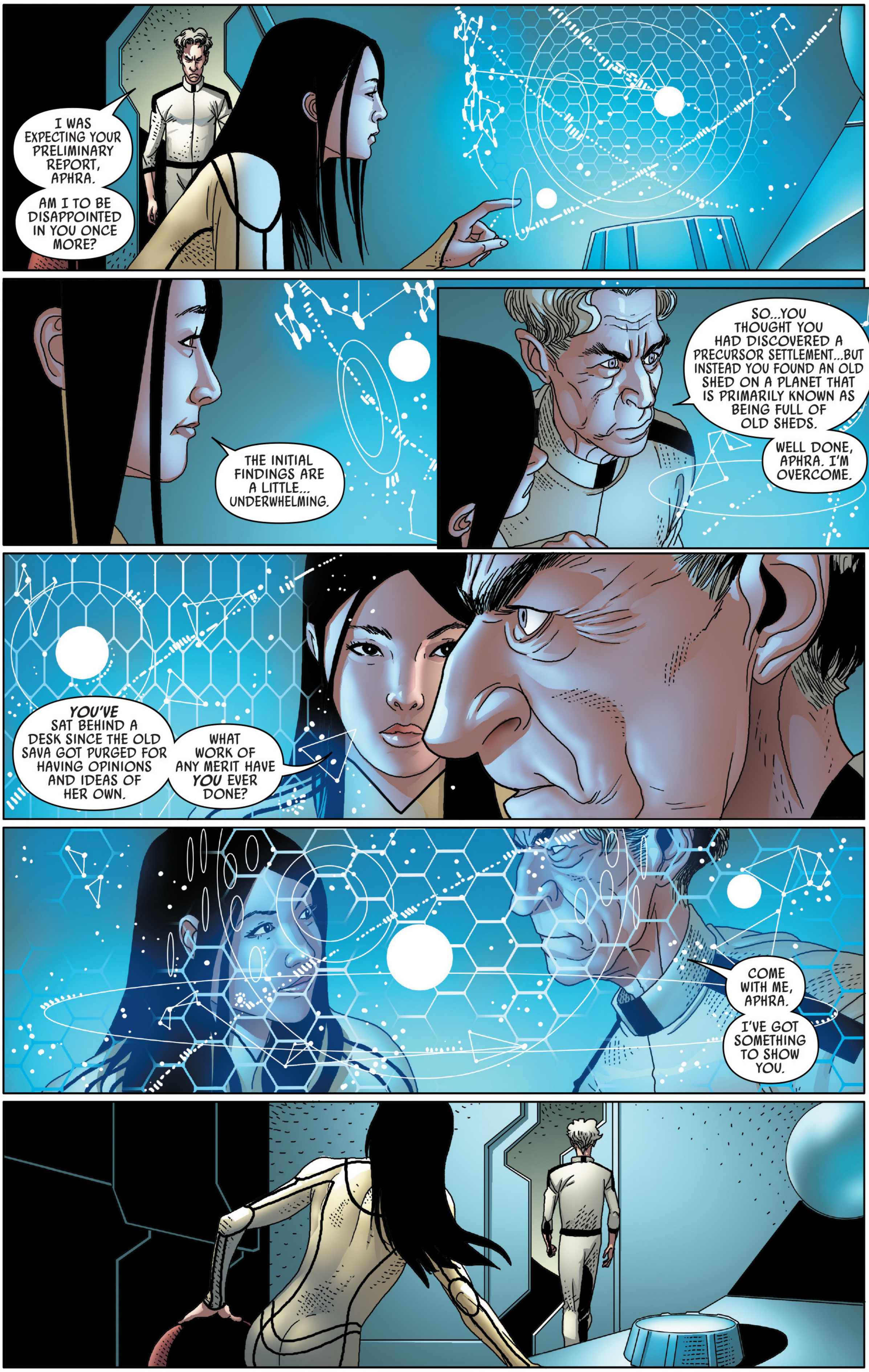
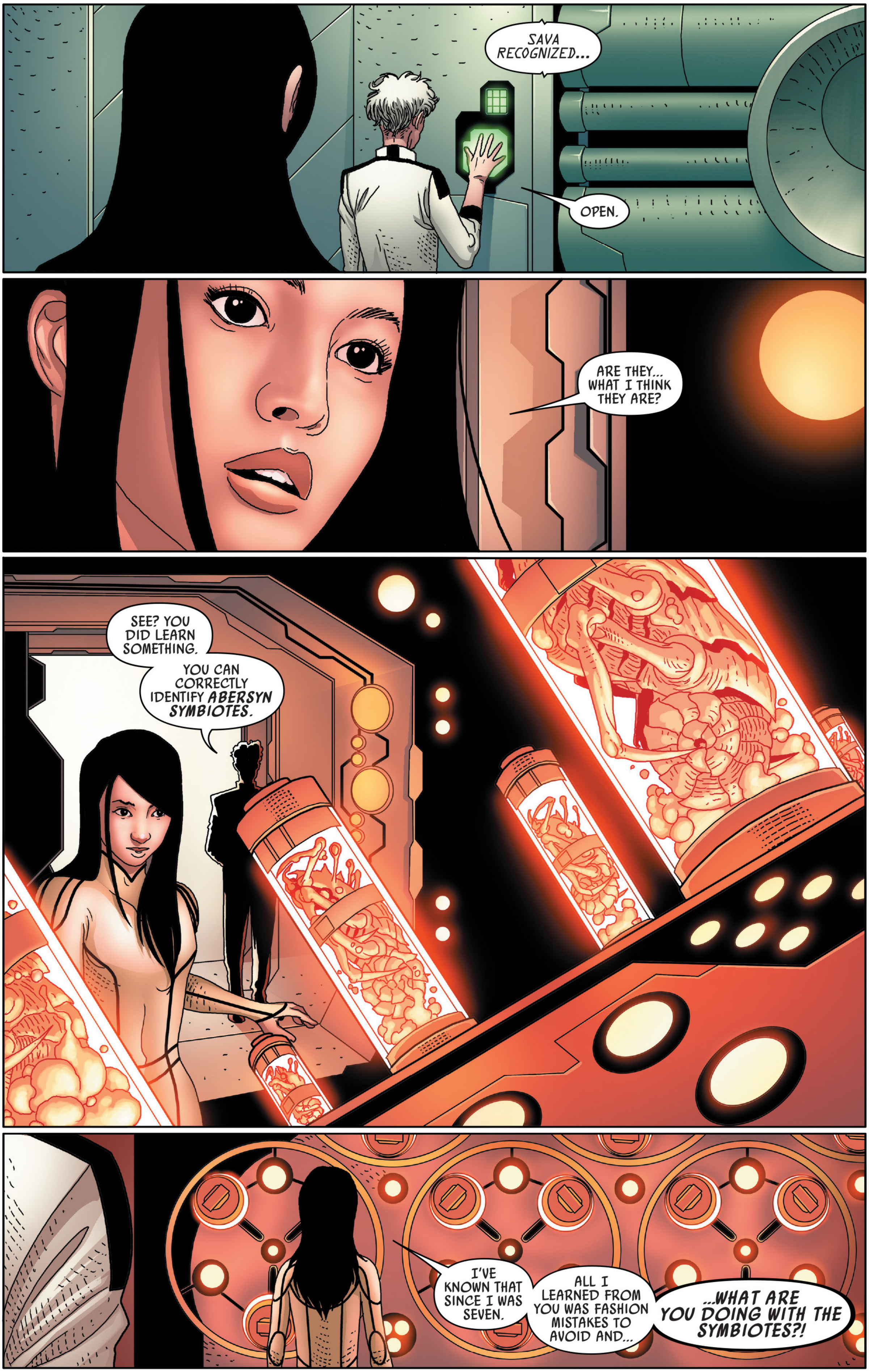
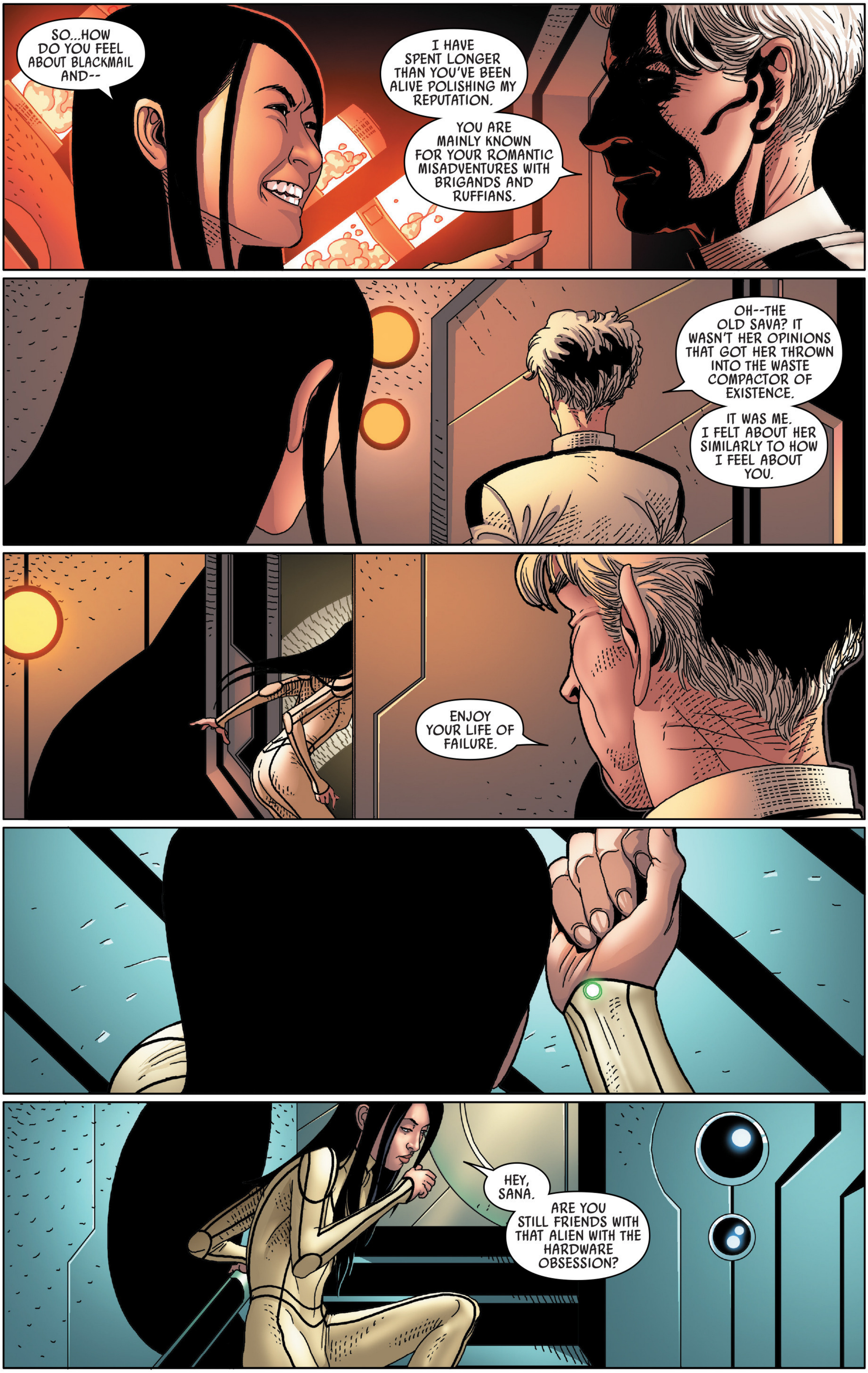
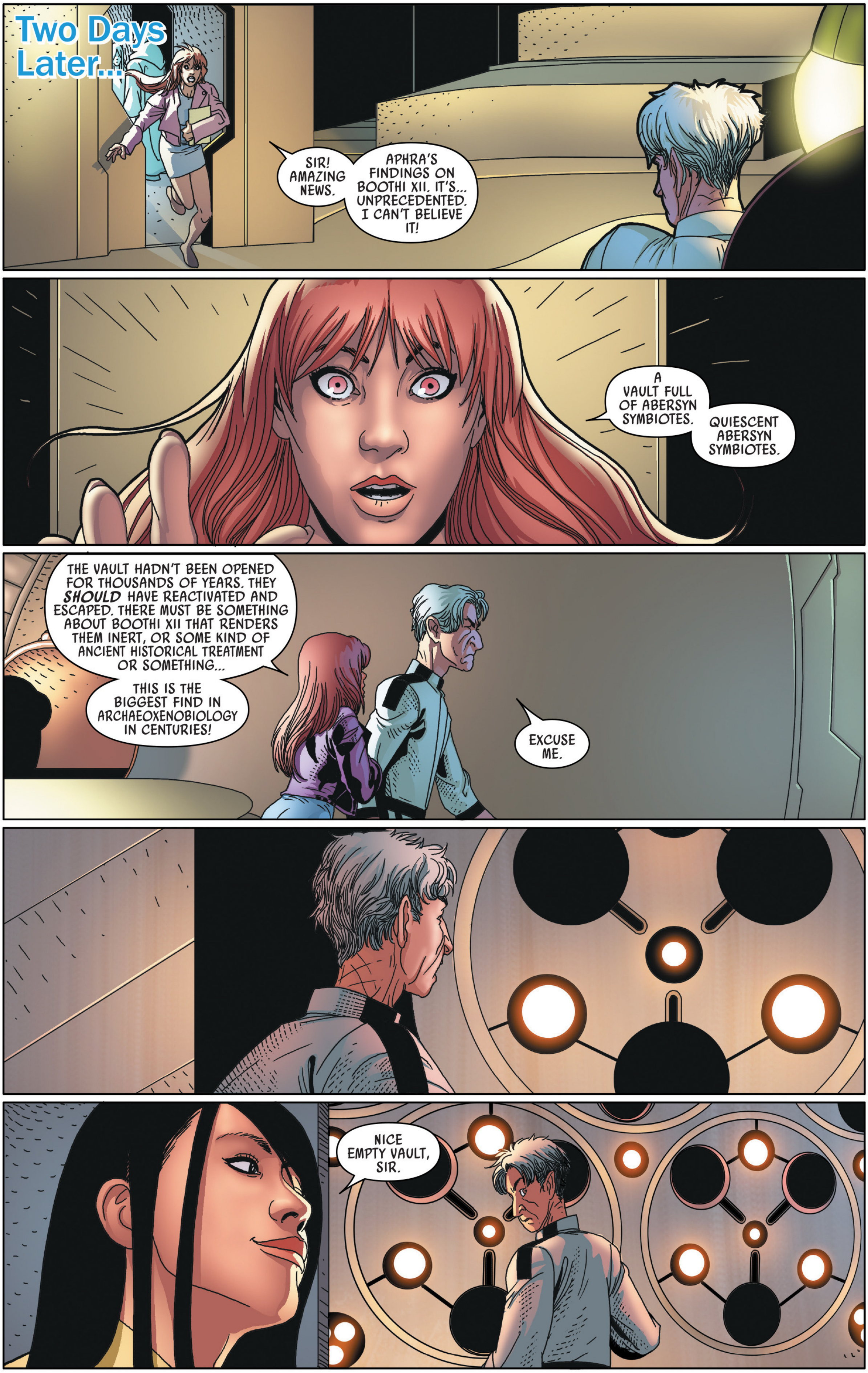

NOTHING.

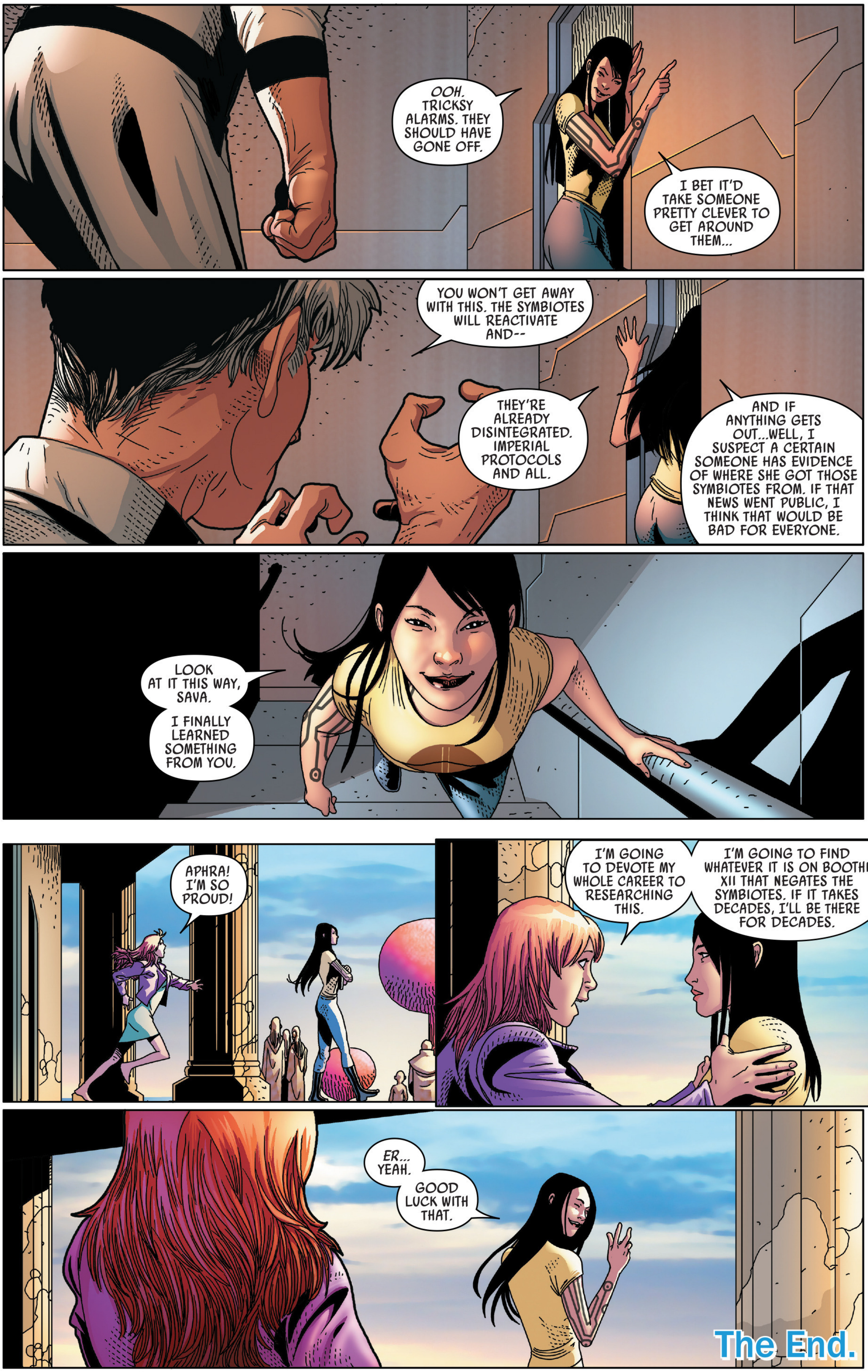

I WAS EXPECTING YOUR PRELIMINARY REPORT, APHRA.
AM I TO BE DISAPPOINTED IN YOU ONCE MORE?
THE INITIAL FINDINGS ARE A LITTLE... UNDERWHELMING.
SO...YOU THOUGHT YOU HAD DISCOVERED A PRECURSOR SETTLEMENT...BUT INSTEAD YOU FOUND AN OLD SHED ON A PLANET THAT IS PRIMARILY KNOWN AS BEING FULL OF OLD SHEDS.
WELL DONE, APHRA. I'M OVERCOME.
YOU'VE SAT BEHIND A DESK SINCE THE OLD SAVA GOT PURGED FOR HAVING OPINIONS AND IDEAS OF HER OWN.
WHAT WORK OF ANY MERIT HAVE YOU EVER DONE?
COME WITH ME, APHRA.
I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU.


SAVA RECOGNIZED...
OPEN.
ARE THEY... WHAT I THINK THEY ARE?
SEE? YOU DID LEARN SOMETHING.
YOU CAN CORRECTLY IDENTIFY ABERSYN SYMBIOTES.
I'VE KNOWN THAT SINCE I WAS SEVEN.
ALL I LEARNED FROM YOU WAS FASHION MISTAKES TO AVOID AND...
...WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THE SYMBIOTES?!

THEY'RE CLASSIFIED BEYOND QUARANTINE. THEY HAVE TO BE FED INTO A PLASMA FURNACE.
THEY'LL INEVITABLY REACTIVATE AND TAKE OVER SOMEONE'S BRAIN STEM...
COWARDICE. REGULAR PLASMA VENT EXPOSURE RENDERS THEM QUIESCENT.
THEY'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF MANY HISTORICAL EMPIRES, AND I'M NOT THROWING AWAY THE CHANCE TO STUDY THEM.
WHY ARE YOU SHOWING ME THIS?
APHRA, YOU ARE FLASH. ARCHAEOLOGY ISN'T ABOUT FLASH.
THIS IS THE WORK OF DECADES. ARCHAEOLOGY IS ABOUT DETERMINATION.
ALL THOSE YEARS MOCKING ME, YOU NEVER THOUGHT TO ASK WHY I SELECTED YOU FOR MY DOCTORAL SUPERVISION...
BECAUSE I WAS NEVER GOING TO LET SOMEONE LIKE YOU BE A DOCTOR.
NOT BECAUSE OF MY STANDARDS.
NOT BECAUSE YOUR WORK IS SLOPPY.
JUST BECAUSE I HATE YOU.


SO...HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BLACKMAIL AND--
I HAVE SPENT LONGER THAN YOU'VE BEEN ALIVE POLISHING MY REPUTATION.
YOU ARE MAINLY KNOWN FOR YOUR ROMANTIC MISADVENTURES WITH BRIGANDS AND RUFFIANS.
OH--THE OLD SAVA? IT WASN'T HER OPINIONS THAT GOT HER THROWN INTO THE WASTE COMPACTOR OF EXISTENCE.
IT WAS ME. I FELT ABOUT HER SIMILARLY TO HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU.
ENJOY YOUR LIFE OF FAILURE.
HEY, SANA.
ARE YOU STILL FRIENDS WITH THAT ALIEN WITH THE HARDWARE OBSESSION?


Two Days Later...
SIR! AMAZING NEWS.
APHRA'S FINDINGS ON BOOTHI XII. IT'S... UNPRECEDENTED. I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
A VAULT FULL OF ABERSYN SYMBIOTES.
QUIESCENT ABERSYN SYMBIOTES.
THE VAULT HADN'T BEEN OPENED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. THEY SHOULD HAVE REACTIVATED AND ESCAPED. THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ABOUT BOOTHI XII THAT RENDERS THEM INERT, OR SOME KIND OF ANCIENT HISTORICAL TREATMENT OR SOMETHING...
THIS IS THE BIGGEST FIND IN ARCHAEOXENOBIOLOGY IN CENTURIES!
EXCUSE ME.
NICE EMPTY VAULT, SIR.


OOH. TRICKSY ALARMS. THEY SHOULD HAVE GONE OFF.
I BET IT'D TAKE SOMEONE PRETTY CLEVER TO GET AROUND THEM...
YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS. THE SYMBIOTES WILL REACTIVATE AND--
THEY'RE ALREADY DISINTEGRATED. IMPERIAL PROTOCOLS AND ALL.
AND IF ANYTHING GETS OUT...WELL, I SUSPECT A CERTAIN SOMEONE HAS EVIDENCE OF WHERE SHE GOT THOSE SYMBIOTES FROM. IF THAT NEWS WENT PUBLIC, I THINK THAT WOULD BE BAD FOR EVERYONE.
LOOK AT IT THIS WAY, SAVA.
I FINALLY LEARNED SOMETHING FROM YOU.
APHRA! I'M SO PROUD!
I'M GOING TO DEVOTE MY WHOLE CAREER TO RESEARCHING THIS.
I'M GOING TO FIND WHATEVER IT IS ON BOOTHI XII THAT NEGATES THE SYMBIOTES. IF IT TAKES DECADES, I'LL BE THERE FOR DECADES.
ER... YEAH.
GOOD LUCK WITH THAT.
The End.

Writer KIERON GILLEN
Artist SALVADOR LARROCA
Colorist EDGAR DELGADO
Letterer VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA
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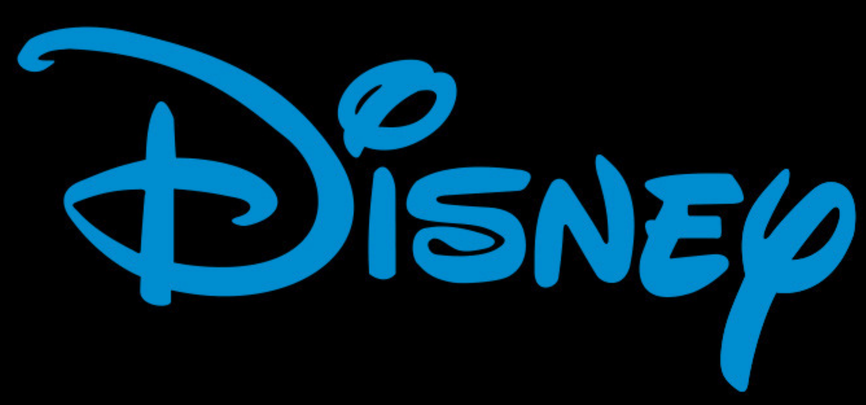

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